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quadrangular building of three stories, flanked by round bastions, of which but one at present remains. In the rear was the inner baillium, in which was a tennis-court and tilt-yard. The outer entrance, which is still in good preservation, consisted of a gate, defended by a portcullis; and the whole was surrounded by the bawn, in which cattle were secured during the night.

The north side was protected by the river Barrow, which supplied with water a wide ditch that extended round the other sides; and the mount on which the castle was situated being thus formed into an island, obtained the name of "Port na hinch," or the "Castle of the Island."

In 1284, the Irish princes, jealous of the encroachments of the English, attacked and burnt the castle; but it was soon afterwards repaired, and taken possession of, by De Vesey, who was then Lord Justice of Ireland.

In 1507, the Irish renewed their hostilities, and considerably injured the castle. It was afterwards fully repaired by Fitzgerald, who erected a church, with a steeple and bells, in the village, but which, in 1515, was destroyed by the Scotch army under Robert Bruce.

For the next hundred years Lea frequently changed its proprietors; and its history is but a mere catalogue of attacks, surrenders, and reprisals.

In 1553, we find it again in possession of the Fitzgeralds, the head of which family was the celebrated Earl of Kildare, who was appointed to "govern all Ireland, as all Ireland could not govern him." He, though entrusted with the government of the country, disregarded the administration of the laws, but as it contributed to his own personal influence and authority. Thus, he furnished the Castle of Lea with guns and ammunition out of the royal stores, in opposition to the express commands of his Majesty.

In 1598, the Castle of Lea was taken by the Irish chieftain O'More, who, having established a garrison, marched with a considerable force, and successfully attacked the Earl of Essex, then Chief Governor, at the pass of Ballybrittas. From the quantity of feathers taken from the gay soldiers of the English favourite, the field of action was called "The Pass of the Plumes."

On the breaking out of the rebellion of 1641, Lea was garrisoned by the rebels, but was shortly afterwards taken possession of by the loyalists, who, in commemoration of the event, planted in the market-place a young ash-tree, which during the period of its existence, (one hundred and seventy years,) attained an immense size, and was universally known as "The Tree of Lea."

Its girth by some is stated to have been 29 feet, while a manuscript which is in the possession of a gentleman in Portarlinton, mentions it to have been eleven yards, and that the shade formed by its foliage exceeded sixty feet in diameter. The tree having lost one of its principal boughs during a storm, went rapidly to decay; and the hollow trunk, having for some time served a poor woman for a cow-house and piggery, sunk, like an aged patriarch, beneath the weight of years, respected and lamented by the inhabitants of the village.

In 1642, Lea was taken by Lord Castlehaven; and in 1650, by the parliamentary forces under Colonel Hewson and Reynolds, and finally dismantled.

The last person who took up his abode at Lea was a noted horse-stealer, (Dempsey,) who converted the extensive vaults under the castle into stables, and for several years successively carried on his nefarious trade. From the dexterity he evinced in committing his depredations, he acquired the Irish name of "Shamas, a Coppul," or "James the Horse;" and as the peasantry, especially of Ireland, are fond of "the wild and wonderful," his history furnished the subject of many an evening tale.

RAILROADS IN THE UNITED STATES.

From a recent file of American papers, we find that the progress of railroads in the United States is estimated as follows: In Pennsylvania, there are fifteen lines completed, and sixty-seven in contemplation; in New York there are six completed, and twenty seven in contemplation; in the state of Ohio, twelve are in progress, but none yet brought to a perfect state of completion; in Massachusetts, there are also several in progress; and the

great railroad from Baltimore, through Maryland, to the Ohio river at Wheeling, a distance of 275 miles, is rapidly approaching to a close. Altogether there are forty-seven railroads completed, and one hundred and thirty-seven commenced, or in contemplation. Besides the great line to the western states from Baltimore to Wheeling, it appears that corresponding lines are projected from Philadelphia and New York; these being required in order to preserve an equality of advantages with Baltimore, in the trade to the great regions of the Ohio river. In the line from Philadelphia to Pittsburg, it is boldly determined upon, to tunnel through the Alleghany mountains, the circuit being otherwise so expensive, as to render that great labour the cheaper course to be pursued. It is to be observed, however, that these railroads have not the solidity, and probable strength and durability of the railroads of this country. The rails are laid down upon wood, and not upon stone, as in the Manchester and Liverpool railroad, and others which our readers may have seen. This plan has been adopted in consequence of the abundance of timber upon the lines of country through which the railroads pass, and the less quantity of labour required for preparing that material, in a country where wages are so high. It is calculated that the wood work must be renewed upon an average once in the course of seven years. Perhaps, as railroads, and indeed the whole science of locomotion, are evidently yet in infancy, this cheaper mode of proceeding may be in reality the more judicious, since less capital is thus endangered by the introduction of improved steam carriages, or other still cheaper and more advantageous locomotive power. The iron-work is all imported from Great Britain, the iron of the United States being too soft for this and other purposes where much friction is produced. For this reason, the government has very judiciously allowed railroad iron to be an exception to the Tariff regulations of the country; it being now exempt from all duty.—Altogether, the progress of the railroad system in the United States opens out a wide and extraordinary scene of speculation as to its effects upon the destinies of that great nation. Through this invention, the people of regions lying hitherto far away from all effectual control, will be brought into the solid union of the social bond; and the fear that the United States were too large for one government, will become an unremembered and visionary folly.—*Athenæum*.

AN IRISH OTTER.

At a recent meeting of the Zoological Society, London, Mr Ogilby called the attention of the members to a specimen of an Irish otter, taken near Newtownlimavady. On account of the intensity of its colouring, which approaches nearly to black, both on the upper and under surface; of the less extent of the pale colour beneath the throat, as compared with the common otter, (*Lutra vulgaris*, Linn.) as it exists in England; and of some difference in the size of the ears, and in the proportions of other parts, Mr. Ogilby has long considered the Irish otter as constituting a distinct species; and he feels strengthened in this view of the subject by the peculiarity of habitation and manners. It is, in fact, to a considerable extent a marine animal, being found chiefly along the coast of the county of Antrim, living in hollows and caverns formed by the scattered masses of the basaltic columns of that coast, and constantly betaking itself to the sea when alarmed or hunted. It feeds chiefly on the salmon; and as it is consequently injurious to the fishery, a premium is paid for its destruction; and there are many persons who make a profession of hunting it, earning a livelihood by the reward paid for it and by disposing of its skin. Mr. Ogilby stated his intention of comparing it minutely with the common otter as soon as he should be enabled to do so by the possession of entire subjects, and especially of attending to the comparison of the osteological structures.

BASALTIC COLUMNS.

A range of basaltic columns has been discovered on the south side of Cairncarny Hill, in the parish of Connor, three miles N. E. of Antrim. The columns are as regu-

larly formed as those of the Giant's Causeway—they are in general hexagonal—they incline from the perpendicular towards the north at an angle of about 17 degrees, the columns at either side leaning towards the centre. The space of ground already opened is about 40 feet in breadth, and 14 deep; the columns appearing at present being about 12 feet in height. It is the opinion of a scientific friend, (as far as he could judge from a hurried observation,) that these columns form probably part of a great whin dyke, running southward from the northern shores of Antrim, and that they will not be found to extend much beyond the width now exposed in view, either towards the east or west. This will, in some degree, soon be ascertained. In the mean time, the discovery of such regular basaltic columns so far inland may form to the geologist a subject of interesting speculation.—*Belfast News Letter*.

CATCHING A TARTAR.

The Galtee mountains, in the county Tipperary, are frequented by a large species of the eagle, which have been an uncommon annoyance to the farmers, in the destruction of their lambs and poultry; there is also a rabbit-warren convenient, which the eagles often visit in search of prey, and kill great numbers, in defiance of every means resorted to for the purpose of destroying them. A few months ago, one of these enormous birds was observed to pounce upon a large cat which was sleeping upon the roof of a thatched cabin, and to carry her off, (taking her, it was supposed, for a rabbit.) The eagle arose right upwards, and the spectators continued to watch him until he soared beyond their sight. About ten minutes after, he was seen to descend, apparently struggling with his intended victim. At last he fell to the earth, not fifty paces from the spot where he lifted the cat, so weakened through loss of blood that he died almost immediately, his throat and breast having been desperately cut in the struggle. The cat was little or nothing the worse.

N.

SINGULAR SAGACITY OF TWO MULES.

About two miles from the town of Ballymahon, in the county of Longford, resides a gentleman, who has in his possession two mules of the Spanish breed. They will regularly go to a pump placed in the yard, and while one applies his mouth to the spout, the other works the handle by alternately raising and depressing his shoulder. When one has satisfied his thirst, he exchanges places with his companion, and returns the service he has received. Improbable as this may appear to some, it is an absolute fact; and the person who gives the account of it, has received it very recently from the owner of the mules, and from several members of his family.

W. C. L.

CHURNING IN CHILE.

In Chile, butter is packed in sheep-skins, with the wool side out, and would be very good in spite of appearances, were it not so much salted. The operation of churning is performed by a donkey. The cream is put into large gourds or dry skins, placed on his back, and then the animal is kept trotting round the yard till the butter is made. In this art they seem not to have advanced a single step since its discovery; for we are told that a countryman some where lost a large jug of cream by carrying it for a distance on a hard trotting horse, which accident led to the important invention of churns and butter. A friend told me that he had presented, some years ago, a Yankee churn to a family residing near the capital, and taught them to use it. So long as it was a novelty they were pleased, but at the end of a few weeks they decided that the donkey made butter just as well, and consequently threw it aside.—*Three Years in the Pacific*.

ORTHOGRAPHICAL TRANSMOGRIFICATION.

A blacksmith lately made out a bill against one of his customers, in which a charge was intended to be made for *steeling two mallets*—i. e. putting steel to the iron points of the instruments. But the son of Vulcan, who had been more used to wielding a sledge-hammer than studying Doctor Johnson, actually wrote the following item: "*To steeling two mad ducks, 2s 1^d*"

THE EXILE'S SONG.

By the side of the Ganges, whose mystical wave
Oft serves as a tomb to the exile and slave,
I mourn, but in vain, for the dear below'd few
That bound me for ever, dear Erin, to you.

In vain does the East all its treasures display,
Or the free Asiatic enliven the day;
My bosom still beats for the dear below'd few,
That mourn'd my departure, dear Erin, from you.

Unchanged is my heart, though my spirit 's subdu'd;
The sunshine of hope, oftentimes will intrude,
And tempt me to sigh for the dear below'd few,
That bound me for ever, dear Erin, to you.

When the woes of the care-worn exile shall cease,
And the mandates of death bring a final release,
O! the last throb of nature's eternal adieu,
Shall be mingled in blessings, dear Erin, for you.

Farewell, honour'd land of my forefathers' birth;
Dear isle of delight—heaven's favoured on earth!
To thy green mantled bowers and mountains of blue,
Dear Erin, my country! for ever adieu!

J. D.

WOODSTOCK CASTLE, ATHY, COUNTY KILDARE.

— "Thy walls that rise sublime,
In proud defiance of all conquering time."

Strength and duration in one glance combined,
High thoughts awoken in the soaring mind;
For man, frail tenant of a day, an hour,
Exults in dreams of long-enduring power;
While noble piles, in ancient models cast,
Teach him a sacred lesson of the past,
Bid him bend o'er the gulf of former days,
Or pierce the future with his ardent gaze.—*M. Cross*.

To have the recollection of the days that are long gone over stirred up in our minds, and to dwell upon them with affectionate interest, may appear weak in the eyes of true philosophy. Yet to dwell fondly on the history of scenes that are for ever fled, if it be a weakness, it seems to be one of the most pardonable weaknesses of our nature—a frailty as universal as it is interesting. It is a sobering reflection which we are naturally affected with, and by it the best sympathies of our nature are often awakened. When contemplating the mouldering remains of the edifices of our forefathers, associations press on the mind, linked as they are with the present and the past, that often convey instructions of no ordinary kind. Perhaps the Castle of Woodstock, the subject of our present notice, may be classed amongst others as affording evidence of the justness of this remark.

From its vicinity, Woodstock Castle has partaken of nearly all the changes that befel Athy. Standing on the western bank of the river Barrow, it was designed to command the principal ford on this part of the river, in conjunction with White's castle, situate on the opposite bank, a little lower down—the ford lying between. The time this castle was built is unknown. Tradition assigns it to about the year 1290, and that a descendant of the earl of Pembroke was its first master; whilst our antiquaries, with more reason, seem inclined to attribute the erection of the present structure to Thomas Fitzgerald, lord of Offaley, and afterwards seventh earl of Kildare, who, on marrying Dorothea, the daughter of Anthony O'Moore, of Leix, received in dower the manors of Woodstock and Rheban, in which family it still remains. The plan of the building was originally a regular square; in after times an addition was made to it of a square tower, joining the south side, and built in uniformity with the front facing the river. The walls are of great thickness, and, considering the attacks they have been exposed to, in good preservation. The mullioned windows are much admired, and were elegantly executed. In viewing the interior from what can be collected from the remains, we are struck with the curious arrangements of ancient architecture. A fine arched gateway, and part of the outer court-wall yet remain. Some short time since a stone, of which the following cut